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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 002564

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/AN/IAA, IO/UNP, AND USUN
STATE FOR WHA/CCA, WHA/CEN, AND WHA/PPC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CU](#) [HO](#) [UNGA](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAN AMBASSADOR TO CUBA NOT IN THE OFFING, BUT
MFA SUGGESTS ONE COULD AID HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 2490

[¶](#)B. STATE 297777

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco Palmieri;
reasons 1.5(B) and (D).

[¶](#)1. (U) This is an action request; see paragraph 6.

[¶](#)2. (U) Deputy Chief of Mission and Political Counselor met with Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Anibel Quinones on October 28 to deliver points in ref B. Quinones was already aware of USG concerns as raised with Government of Honduras (GOH) officials in ref A. Quinones added Ambassador Canahuati had also informed MFA that State Department officials had raised the issue during the Honduran Minister of Public Security's visit to Washington during the previous week.

[¶](#)3. (C) Quinones reiterated that the naming of a Honduran ambassador to Cuba is not on the immediate agenda of the Foreign Ministry, nor have they have had any recent discussion with the President's office on the topic. He did echo earlier comments (see ref A) that the GOH is concerned about being able to provide consular services to its 700 Honduran nationals who are studying medicine there. He also added a new wrinkle, suggesting that the GOH is concerned about the possible political indoctrination of these medical students and needs to expand staffing at their offices in Cuba to monitor better the type of training these students may be receiving.

[¶](#)4. (C) Quinones stated that at some point Honduras would have to name an ambassador. He said that they have not received any pressure from the Cuban Ambassador in Tegucigalpa nor has there been recent domestic pressure, which has allowed them to move slowly. He explained, however, that the conclusion and signing of a maritime boundary treaty with Cuba is a top priority for the GOH, in part, he claimed, because it will strengthen their defense against Nicaragua's maritime border case in The Hague. He added that the GOH is close to finishing a similar agreement with Mexico and they signed an agreement with the Cayman Islands and the United Kingdom in [¶](#)2002. The agreement with Cuba, we learned separately, is completed. All that is lacking is a signing ceremony.

[¶](#)5. (C) Quinones then asked if he could speculate on a possible course of action that might serve both countries, interests. He first made clear that this approach had not been discussed with either President Maduro or Foreign Minister Rosa Bautista. As a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights, he said, Honduras felt it was positioned to play a key role in advancing the international effort to press Cuba to live up to its international human rights commitments. Quinones said that Honduras wanted to use its time on the UNCHR to promote human rights in the hemisphere. He asked directly whether it would be helpful to the U.S. to have a loyal ally in Havana who could help press the human rights case there. He noted that the current chief of the U.S. Interests Section, Jim Cason, was favorably known to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from his earlier posting here, and imagined that he would be comfortable working closely with the Honduran mission. Quinones then suggested that the MFA would seek to name a senior career Honduran diplomat to the Charge post in Havana. He said this would give Honduras the necessary level of experienced representation to meet its consular needs and a seasoned official who could engage more effectively on human rights issues in Cuba. He added that it would also delay the need for naming an ambassador. Another option that he said had been discussed would be to dually accredit a Honduran Ambassador in another country to Cuba, although this was not an attractive option.

[¶](#)6. (C) COMMENT: Quinones at one point made it clear that the GOH and MFA are unhappy with the current Charge in Havana and wanted to replace him with a more experienced officer. It appears that they will not be naming an ambassador in the immediate future but are considering ways to upgrade the level of representation in Havana. While the GOH's concern about its consular services is laudable, we believe that the GOH is most concerned about finalizing its maritime boundary treaty with Cuba. Post would appreciate department and US

Interest Section Havana's guidance on how to respond to Quinones,s idea about the appointment of a more senior MFA official in the Charge role and interest in working with US on human rights issues. END COMMENT.

Palmer